

Service Robots and Waiters, such a good team!

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Abstract

The use of service robots is gaining popularity. It has been considered one of the most influential technological implementations in providing services in the restaurant business and hospitality (Tung and Law, 2017). This study aims to explain the willingness to accept the use of robots in an augmented way to human work in hospitality services. To this end, a two-stage investigation was carried out: first, a qualitative study to identify the aspects of the service provided by the robot highlighted by the real clients; later, a relationship model was designed and then evaluated with quantitative data.

The results show that the conceptual model explains 84.5% of the willingness to accept service robot use in restaurant establishments and 52.1% of the intention to recommend this type of service robots. Specifically, the willingness to accept service robots use is mainly explained by the positive influence of the intention to recommend, hedonic motivations and outcome quality.

From a theoretical point of view, this study contributes to explaining the willingness to accept service robots use and recommend the services provided by robots in the hospitality and restaurant business. This study offers a different approach to previous studies that have focused on variables from traditional models of technology acceptance, such as perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, performance expectancy or effort expectancy.

From a practical point of view, this study highlights the importance of companies enhancing the hedonic character of the customer experience, the anthropomorphic characteristics of robots, perceived safety and quality of services provided jointly by staff and robots, and outcome quality. It is essential to consider that these variables influence both positive attitudes and objections and the willingness to accept and intention to recommend.

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